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## ABSTRACT

Research shows that children benefit when they are served by stable and highly trained center-based staff and caregivers. Responding to the unequal distribution of child-care supply across the state and a need for well-trained caregivers, First 5 California approved an initiative to train early care and education (ECE) staff using different project models. This brief evaluates six demonstration projects. The aims of these projects include recruiting staff, reducing barriers to progress or completion of training, increasing retention in the ECE field, and building local capacity and infrastructure for coordinated training and retention efforts. PACE is evaluating the models between January 2001 and July 2003. Respondents participate in telephone interviews, data from which are analyzed using descriptive methods. Results show that participants are ethnically diverse. Overall, the majority of participants live with a partner or spouse and have children. Many new trainees require extensive counseling and informal support. Lack of financial aid is a crucial barrier. Each project addresses these challenges differently. Innovative practices for recruiting, supporting, and retaining participants; policy implications; and areas for future research are discussed. (RT)

**Training and Retaining Early Care and Education  
Staff. Training Projects: Evaluation.  
Year One Progress Report 2001-2002.  
Policy Brief.**

Elizabeth Burr  
Bridget O'Brien

February 2003

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# POLICY BRIEF

FEBRUARY 2003

## Training and Retaining Early Care and Education Staff

### Training Projects: Evaluation

Year One Progress Report  
2001-2002

Elizabeth Burr  
Bridget O'Brien

Children benefit when they are served by stable and highly trained center-based staff and caregivers, according to accumulating evidence.<sup>1</sup> But we have much to learn about how community colleges and local training organizations can recruit a more diverse early care and education (ECE) staff, provide training in a cost-effective manner, and facilitate job placement.

Responding to the unequal distribution of child-care supply across the state and a need for well-trained caregivers, First 5 California approved an initiative to train ECE staff using different project models. The initiative aims to increase the number of individuals entering and remaining in the workforce by developing or expanding preservice or inservice training opportunities. The geographic focus is on regions with a scarcity of child-care supply. Another important goal of this program is to increase the number of ECE staff working with infants and children with disabilities and other special needs.

PACE developed a request for proposals (RFP) process, and in January, 2001 distributed \$4.8 million of First 5 California funds to six training projects representing various program designs, geographic locations, and target populations. The six demonstration projects selected for study are:

- ☐ The Chicano Federation
- ☐ Inland Empire CONNECTIONS Project
- ☐ Early Childhood Job Training Project (ECJTP)
- ☐ Enhanced Mentor Program (EMP)
- ☐ Nevada County Educator Support Program (Nevada ESP)
- ☐ San Mateo Career Development Program (San Mateo CDP)

Table 1 provides key dimensions on which the regional projects vary: location, length of training, enrollments as of June, 2002 and primary focus on four key aims: 1) Recruit ECE staff 2) Reduce barriers to progress or completion of training 3) Increase retention in the ECE field, and 4) Build local capacity and infrastructure for coordinated training and retention efforts.

As indicated in the table, all funded projects address these four aims, but not necessarily with equal emphasis. The project enrollment numbers also vary, by design. For example, the Nevada ESP project enrolls a fixed cohort, offering intensive services over the course of the program. Building a group identity among these trainees is a focus in this project. In contrast, the Inland Empire CONNECTIONS project has open enrollment, offering a variety of services to a large number of individuals. Although all of the projects offer training in community colleges, several also provide additional trainings on a shorter-term or one-time basis.

### Policy Brief 03-3

Research supported by:



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TABLE 1. Select Project Variation

	Chicano Federation	CONNECTIONS	ECJTP	Enhanced Mentor Program	Nevada ESP	San Mateo CDP
County	San Diego, Imperial	San Bernardino, Riverside	West Contra Costa	Fresno, Humboldt, Mendocino, Los Angeles, Yuba	Nevada	San Mateo
Enrollments as of 6/02 (type of enrollment: fixed or open)	988 (Open enrollment)	1,211 (Open enrollment)	174 (More fixed cohort)	180 (Fixed cohorts)	81 (Fixed cohort)	264 (Open enrollment)
Length of training	8 week non-unit bearing FCCH training or college semester	College semester or unit-bearing classes for FCCH	College semester	College semester	College semester	College semester or individual workshops & services
Biggest emphases among 4 research questions	Recruit and reduce barriers (1,2)	All 4 equally (1,2,3,4)	Reduce barriers and retain (2,3)	All 4 equally (1,2,3,4)	Reduce barriers (2)	Recruit, reduce barriers and retain (1,2,3)

### Preliminary Findings

As of June, 2002, projects had recruited 3,197 participants. These trainees are taking college courses and engaging in training, moving towards applying for a Child Development Permit or a family child-care license. Among the 1,614 participants who had enrolled by February, 2002, 129 participants attained a Child Development Permit or a higher level of permit; 186 participants had applied for or attained Family Child Care (FCC) licenses, and 20 had started a business.

### Evaluation Overview

Between January 2001 and July 2003, PACE is evaluating the six training models. The goal is to inform First 5 California about which models, or components of models, are most effective. Stemming directly from the aims of the initiative, the four research questions guiding the evaluation are:

- ☐ To what extent does the training project recruit diverse individuals into the field of ECE?
- ☐ To what extent does the training project include supports that address barriers inhibiting progress or completion of training by participants?

- ☐ To what extent does the training project offer supports that are likely to retain ECE staff in the field?
- ☐ To what extent does the training project build ongoing local capacity and infrastructure for high-quality coordinated training and retention efforts, with a clear plan for collaboration?

### Time Frame

As shown in Figure 1, the training projects are funded from January 2001 through June 2003. The current progress report includes the first wave of data, collected in the first year and a half of the evaluation (January 2001-June 2002). The final

report analyzing all evaluation data will be completed in October 2003.

## Methodology

To inform the research questions, PACE is examining measurable outcomes over time, through several methods, working closely with the regional projects funded under this program. Since the six projects place varying emphases on the four aims, we would expect that some research questions are more relevant for them than for others.

Information for this progress report is focused primarily on data gathered from the Year One telephone survey of training project participants. Other information from evaluation activities was used to provide context for the survey findings and will be incorporated into the final report. Additional sources of data for the evaluation include:

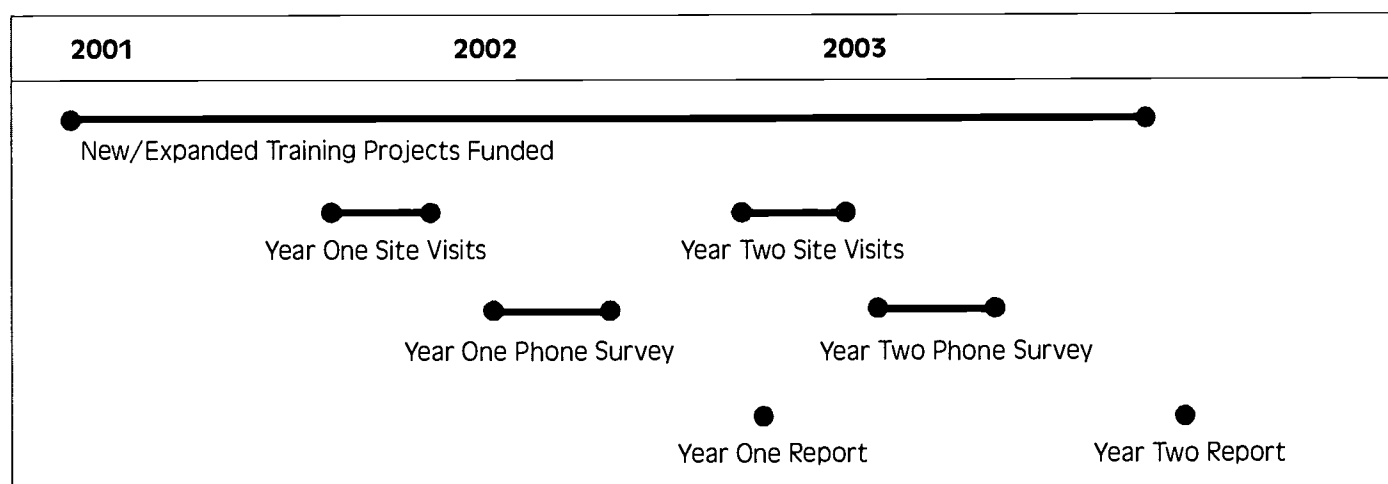
- A Qualitative Implementation Study (QIS) to track how project staff is implementing their programs and moving toward the four major objectives. One goal is to identify the key organizational elements and factors operating within local contexts that enhance or constrain successful implementation.
- A cost analysis of the training projects to determine the unit costs associated with increasing the number of ECE trainees and increasing their retention rates and professional development.

**Sample.** Training participants enrolled by November 2001 were included in the phone survey sample. The six projects provided lists of consenting participants from which to draw the sample. Consenting participants were stratified according to education levels and the type of employment (i.e., working in a

center, working in a family child-care home, or not currently working in ECE). This stratification captures the range of staff involved in the training projects. All who participated in the phone survey were paid \$25 for their time. The response rate was approximately 80% across all projects, for a total sample of 1,111.

**Telephone Survey.** Each respondent was called by phone, and asked to participate in the evaluation. All who agreed were administered a 20-minute telephone interview, which contained both closed-and open-ended questions on demographics regarding age, education, and household composition; working conditions, such as current employment, hourly wage, and ages of children served; utilization of services and supports offered by the training projects; satisfaction with these services; and outcomes, such as training and retention.

FIGURE 1. Timeline of Evaluation



**Analysis.** Researchers conducted descriptive analyses to present these data, including demographic information and utilization of support services offered by the training projects.

## Limitations of Year One Findings

PACE's ability to quantify the effectiveness of the training projects is based largely on measuring the amount of training that recipients complete and the length of time they stay in their jobs. Thus, the comprehensive evaluation of the projects requires substantial time to pass. These findings are preliminary, based on the initial 18 months of program implementation. The final report will provide results based on thirty months of retention and training information, which will be a more valid assessment of program outcomes.

It also is important to note that there is no control or comparison group in this evaluation. While the evaluation is comparative, it is important to remember that the project designs vary widely, from target populations, number of participating trainees, services and supports offered, length of training, and intensity of involvement. PACE will attempt to examine ways in which particular projects or project components may be associated with outcomes. But this study design does not allow for conclusions regarding causality.

## Year One Findings

### ■ To what extent do the training projects recruit diverse individuals into the field of early care and education?

As of June 2002, projects had recruited 3,197 participants. A diverse group of ECE staff may better represent and serve children in centers and family child-care homes, including infants and children with disabilities and other special needs. Four of the six training projects included this goal of recruiting diverse staff among their top priorities.

### *Participant demographics*

- Participants are ethnically diverse. Overall, the majority of participants in all programs is Latino (57%), followed by Caucasian (23%). However, some projects are unique in the ethnic composition of their participants. For example, the vast majority of participants (90%) in the Chicano Federation's program is Latino.
- The six projects have nearly equal numbers of center-based staff (41%) and individuals who are new to the field, i.e. not working in child care at the time of enrollment (41%). Additionally, nearly 20% of participants are family child-care providers.
- Overall, when they enrolled in the projects, most participants had less education than a two-year college degree (36% had a high school degree or less while 40% had some

college experience but no degree). The vast majority of participants in the Chicano Federation Program and in Nevada ESP had no college experience upon enrollment (69% and 72%, respectively).

### *Household composition and income*

- Overall, the majority of participants in all of the programs lives with a partner or spouse and has children. Over half of all participants who have dependent children require child care for those children while at work or in training.
- Nearly half of all employed participants (48%) work between 21 and 40 hours per week at a paid job, with an average of 35 hours. Among those working in ECE jobs (59%), 63% work between 21 and 40 hours per week, with an average of 37 hours.
- Participants in ECJTP reported the lowest mean annual income (\$14,071), while participants in the CONNECTIONS program reported the highest mean annual income (\$20,410).
- Between 21-34% of participants across the six projects receive public assistance for their medical care, while 12-27% utilize publicly-funded food support.

While the data above are presented in the aggregate, Tables 2 and 3 demonstrate the variability among projects in selected characteristics of their participants: ethnicity and type of provider at time of enrollment in the project.

**TABLE 2. Participant Ethnicity \***

%(n)	Chicano Fed	CONNECTIONS	ECJTP	Enhanced Mentor	Nevada ESP	San Mateo CDP
	n = 349	n = 255	n = 118	n = 115	n = 81	n = 146
Latino	89.4 (312)	38.5 (98)	56.1 (66)	39.3 (45)	8.6 (7)	72.7 (106)
White	6.5 (23)	31.9 (81)	0.0 (0)	31.5 (36)	82.8 (67)	11.9 (17)
Black	2.8 (10)	23.4 (60)	0.0 (0)	11.0 (13)	0.0 (0)	1.7 (3)
American Indian or Native Alaskan	0.0 (0)	0.6 (1)	0.0 (0)	2.6 (3)	3.0 (2)	0.0 (0)
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.5 (2)	3.1 (8)	36.8 (43)	7.2 (8)	1.4 (1)	5.4 (8)
Multi-racial	0.4 (2)	0.6 (1)	0.0 (0)	7.4 (8)	2.8 (2)	6.2 (9)
Other	0.5 (2)	1.9 (5)	7.1 (8)	1.0 (1)	1.4 (1)	2.1 (3)

\* Baseline data are used in this chart. Lower n's are due to missing data.

As shown in Table 2, most projects have a majority of participants who identify as non-White. Overall, nearly 60% of program participants (n=634) are Latino. The exception, the Nevada ESP, is situated in a county with a largely white population. Both the Chicano Federation program (89%) and the San Mateo CDP program (73%) have a majority of Latino participants. The CONNECTIONS project has the highest number of Black participants (23%), while the ECJTP program has the highest number of Asian-American or Pacific Islander participants (37%).

The training projects offer training for experienced ECE staff as well as for individuals who are new to the

child-care field. (PACE defines participants as 'new to the field' if they were not working in a paid child-care job at the time of enrollment in the training project). Notably, as indicated in Table 3, the programs have nearly equal numbers of center-based experienced providers (41%) and staff/providers who are new to the field (41%). Additionally, nearly 20% of participants are experienced family child-care providers. Although all programs offer training relevant for ECE staff in centers and family child-care homes, the Enhanced Mentor Program, Nevada ESP, San Mateo CDP and CONNECTIONS have the largest contingents of family child-care providers (20% or more). Both the Chicano Federation program and the ECJTP consist

of a large number of caregivers who are new to the field (76% and 61% respectively), in contrast to the Nevada ESP, which consists of less than 10% of ECE staff who are new to the field.

All six training projects have been successful in attracting a diverse group of ECE staff. The challenge, however, are barriers that inhibit progress in accumulating ECE and general education (GE) units. As suggested by the data above, these include having little formal education experience; balancing work, school and family; and low wages. Especially notable are the high rates of public assistance receipt.

**Remaining questions.** As PACE continues to track the training participants, we aim to determine



TABLE 3. Type of Child-Care Employment at Time of Enrollment in Project \*

%(n)	Chicano Fed	CONNECTIONS	ECJTP	Enhanced Mentor	Nevada ESP	San Mateo CDP
	n = 346	n = 234	n = 109	n = 116	n = 81	N = 140
Family Child-Care Provider	26.0 (90)	12.4 (29)	4.6 (5)	27.6 (32)	25.9 (21)	23.6 (33)
Center-Based Provider	13.9 (48)	71.9 (168)	40.4 (44)	33.6 (39)	66.7 (54)	53.6 (75)
Not Working in Child Care at Enrollment	60.1 (208)	15.7 (37)	55.0 (60)	38.8 (45)	7.4 (6)	22.9 (32)

\* Baseline data are used in this chart. Lower n's are due to missing data.

which projects successfully attract and retain a diverse group of ECE staff and through which means.

#### ■ To what extent do the training projects address barriers inhibiting progress or completion of training by participants?

Although the participant characteristic data suggest that the projects are successful in recruiting a diverse group of ECE staff, they also provide evidence of some of the barriers that individuals face in progressing through training. These barriers are the focus of the second research question.

According to project staff and project instructors/trainers, many new trainees require extensive counseling and informal support, especially those with limited academic training, those from low-income backgrounds, and those with limited English proficiency. Many entrants have

never taken college-level courses. Furthermore, general education (GE) requirements at community colleges are a huge barrier for many trainees. Attaining higher levels of the Child Development Permit—and moving up in the field—depends on acquiring these GE units. Furthermore, many have little information about the ECE job market and how to secure a job.

Lack of financial aid, including assistance with the cost of books, is a crucial barrier. Many trainees are working full or part-time, although not necessarily in the ECE field. Some have young children and face high child-care costs, adding to their financial burdens.

All six projects prioritized this goal of offering a variety of supports to mediate some of these barriers and facilitate student progress and completion of training.

- Four programs offered participants a monetary stipend in addition to providing support services for participants. Most participants (69%) who received a stipend used some of their money to pay for books and tuition.
- Overall few participants in the three projects that offered free child care during training used it. Participants in ECJTP were the exception; 28% of their participants used the support. Participants in other projects may have used their stipend money to pay for child care.
- Although all programs offered academic counseling (help choosing courses) to participants, utilization of this support varied widely by program. For example, 25% of participants in the CONNECTIONS project used this support, in contrast to 74% of ECJTP participants.



Participants are taking college courses and engaging in training, moving towards applying for a Child Development Permit or a Family Child-Care License. By June 2002, among the 1,614 participants who had enrolled by February 2002, 129 participants attained a Child Development Permit or a higher level of Permit. By June of 2002, 186 participants had applied for or attained Family Child Care Licenses, and 20 had started a business.

**Remaining questions.** Through June 2003, PACE will gather more information on classes and training from survey respondents. Questions about training and education will be asked of initial recipients who continued in the training projects, as well as those who did not continue in the projects. This will allow analysis of the effect of continued project participation on training activities. PACE also will determine for whom the project supports are most effective, in terms of continued progress in training and retention in the ECE field.

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■ **To what extent do the training projects offer supports that are likely to retain ECE staff in the field?**

Training more individuals will do little to expand the workforce unless staff secure and are retained in ECE jobs. All projects offer a variety of supports to encourage participants to continue with training, and to get a job and stay in the ECE field. Four of the six training projects included this

goal of retaining staff among their top priorities by offering supports linked to employment and retention.

- All programs offered assistance in setting career goals to their participants. Participant utilization of this service varied by program considerably. Most participants met with a counselor once per month or less frequently.
- All training programs offered employment assistance services to participants. The type of assistance varies across projects, and includes offering job placement services, career counseling, and resume workshops, listing employment opportunities in newsletters, providing a job resource library, and leading field trips to local centers to visit high quality ECE environments.

**Remaining questions.** Because it is still early in the evaluation, it is difficult to discuss retention in the ECE field at this point. Through June 2003, PACE will follow training project participants, both those who remained in the projects and those that did not. Using data from the Year One survey, PACE will be able to provide information on predictors of retention in the ECE field. Future questions of interest include: Which participant characteristics most strongly predict retention? Do certain factors—such as use of particular supports—predict retention? Are different project components associated with higher rates of retention? PACE also will determine which projects are situated

in counties with CARES programs, as participants may be eligible for these retention programs.

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■ **To what extent do the training projects build ongoing local capacity and infrastructure for high-quality coordinated training and retention efforts, with a clear plan for collaboration?**

All projects are collaborating with other agencies, community colleges and other partners to maximize resources and capitalize on existing programmatic strengths. This initiative has spurred new collaborations among organizations, and deepened existing ones. For example, the Nevada ESP is able to provide textbooks to participants through a loan program supported by the local child-care planning council (LPC); their support of a faculty member at the community college has increased staff time available for student counseling and support services; and the local Commission has funded a new child development center at the college which serves as a practicum setting for ESP participants. The Nevada ESP also has driven the community college to design a parallel ECE training track that is aligned with the statewide Child Development Permit matrix, such that core courses are now being offered every semester in two rural, underserved areas.

In the last section of this progress report, we identify several ways in which these relationships and project components might continue beyond this initiative.



## Innovative Practices

In the original request for proposals (RFP) for this initiative, projects were encouraged to be innovative in their efforts to recruit, support and retain participants. This section reports on several successful practices that could be replicated elsewhere in efforts to recruit and retain ECE staff.

### Intensive Job Placement Support

The Early Childhood Job Training Project (ECJTP) in West Contra Costa County offers training and employment services to improve access for individuals with limited English proficiency. Specifically, the project provides prospective ECE staff with: 1) academic support tailored to the needs of students with limited English proficiency, 2) job preparation and placement services, and 3) long-term post-employment training, placement, and support services designed to qualify clients for more lucrative ECE positions.

The job placement assistance is particularly noteworthy for its individualized and ongoing support. At ECJTP, a full-time staff person is devoted to job placement for participants. This includes assistance with resumes, finding jobs, talking with employers, practicing interviewing skills with participants, and accompanying them to visit programs and follow up. Once a participant starts a new ECE job, the job placement coordinator conducts visits at 1 week, and 1-, 3-, 6-, and 12-month

intervals. Project staff receives employment information such as pay, benefits, etc. from the employers themselves, with consent from the participant, in order to track salaries.

Participants reported to project staff that they wanted to see high quality centers, as well as centers with various teaching philosophies. ECJTP staff felt equally strongly about helping participants observe high quality ECE settings. As a result, they developed an innovative solution: a day-long field trip to four centers, which includes a play-based parent co-op, a Montessori preschool, a Chinese bilingual school district preschool and an infant program. ECJTP repeats the trip approximately every two weeks. One or two staff members take four participants to the four sites, as well as to a local Resource & Referral agency, followed by lunch to discuss the experience.

### Coordination with County Retention Incentive (CARES) Program

The San Mateo Career Development Program (CDP) targets both new and existing ECE staff, with an emphasis on providers from under-served areas and those from Spanish-speaking background. The project is co-located with the county's retention incentive program, SaMCARES, which targets a more highly-trained group of ECE staff. Together, the two efforts provide financial incentives and individual support to all levels of caregivers.

For some CDP participants, the program has provided the support and the tools to make decisions about their career choice; for others, the program has prompted them to return to school and enroll in a college-level, unit-bearing class for the first time in many years; finally, for the many immigrants in the program, the alternative, non-traditional trainings created by this program have enabled them to take their first class in the new country, offered in their first language.

The Career Development Project has played a vital role in serving as a bridge between new or existing providers with little formal training and SaMCARES. While SaMCARES targets experienced professionals who have been in the field for at least a year, the CDP aims to capture the rest of the workforce by concentrating on the recruitment of new students into the field and existing providers lacking in formal education or training. These professionals are often family child-care providers who have been working in isolation with little exposure to other ECE professionals, providers who are not fluent in English and therefore have limited or no access to support or training opportunities via traditional venues, and providers who are under-privileged and cannot pay the costs associated with training. The two programs complement each other and have created synergetic effects that would not have been achieved by either one alone.

## Supporting Spanish-Speaking and Hmong Family Child-Care Providers

The city of Fresno and rural, unincorporated areas of Fresno County have a critical shortage of ECE staff who is trained in infant toddler care and who speak the languages of the families served, especially Spanish. At its Fresno site, the Enhanced Mentor Program (EMP) has expanded an existing mentoring program for family child-care providers and offers additional course offerings in Spanish that count towards the Child Development Permit.

Twenty-four Spanish-speaking providers were recruited at Fresno City College to participate in specialized child development coursework leading to a Child Development Permit. The Monolingual Spanish Certificate Program includes coursework in child development, child/family/community, and infant health and safety. The providers earned eight units of college credit. The college's Mentor Coordinator also developed new, special studies courses called English as a Second Language (ESL) for Child-Care Providers. Twenty-four students participated in two semesters of coursework.

Also in Fresno, an EMP mentor teacher recruited and mentored 14 Hmong students to take courses toward the Child Development Permit. To offer additional support for these students, the college's Mentor Coordinator developed a one-unit course, Hmong Women in Education. Some activities

included a literacy workshop, Hmong folklore, Hmong art, and professional development activities to support their work with young children. As an outgrowth of the literacy workshop, participants designed a project integrating oral traditions in needlework. In order to continue their outreach, the students started a new club, Hmong Women in Early Care and Education, to support other women in the field of early childhood. Seven of the students have gotten jobs in ECE and ten students are eligible and are applying for the Child Development Permit.

As a result of this project, the Fresno Center of New Americans is seeking funding to recruit and train potential Hmong family child-care providers. The Center has asked the EMP students to mentor their providers in working with young children, to expand the choices for parents and providers working in the community.

## Initial Policy Implications

This report raises several issues for program designers and policymakers, providing more data but also raising further questions about how to stabilize and improve the quality of the workforce.

*The relationships among training projects and community colleges are critical for sustaining project elements after First 5 California funding ends.*

For example, the presence of specialized advisors and counselors within training projects or community colleges appears to yield positive benefits. College counselors often cannot spend enough time with child development students. An ECE advocate can suggest appropriate courses, help to schedule courses, and ease trainees' transition back to college for those with limited academic experience.

*CBO-based training projects may be better able than community colleges to meet the diverse needs of entry-level ECE staff as they work towards higher levels of education.*

Support services such as academic counseling, tutoring, mentoring, and employment counseling must be strong and steady for trainees to succeed in community colleges. These tailored services often are beyond what colleges are able to provide. The CBO-based training projects have developed innovative and personalized ways of supporting and motivating trainees with limited academic preparation. The local programs also have experience in reaching individuals from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, steady collaborations can be an effective way to capitalize on and leverage resources.

*Training projects should tailor their intervention to a targeted population or program goal.*

In the beginning of their outreach and recruitment efforts, most



projects found it easier to enroll existing providers than to recruit new ECE staff. However, even ECE staff that had worked in the field for some time often had low levels of formal education. Because training needs vary among populations (individuals with limited English, individuals with low levels of academic preparation, center-based vs. FCC providers, new vs. more established staff) efforts to support them must be tailored in order to be effective.

## Areas for Future Research

As PACE continues to assess the effectiveness of the training projects, it is important to place the evaluation in the larger context of ECE workforce development. Many important questions remain about how to most effectively train and retain a diverse population of ECE staff. Although it is beyond the scope of this document to cover these issues in detail, two questions are discussed briefly below to highlight intersections between the current evaluation and future research possibilities.

### *What types of training will have a direct impact on the quality of care?*

Additional research in this area would prove valuable to efforts at improving the availability of quality ECE programs. Given that the training projects vary in terms of the kinds of training they offer, the evaluation would be more complete

with some estimation of this effect. In other words, further examination is needed about the particular type, amount, and quality of training that leads to quantifiable differences in the quality of care provided to children.

### *Are informal supports, such as building a shared identity among training project participants, correlated with continued training and retention?*

Evidence from the qualitative implementation study suggests that participants respond favorably to the 'group identity' in some of the training projects. They report feeling part of a community and enjoy the opportunity to share their experiences with other ECE staff in casual settings. It is not clear, however, whether the presence of these informal networks actually leads to continued training, higher retention, or improved practice.



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